Data Composition

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In this day and age, it remains rare to find an exhibition that focuses on sounds, the concept of sound, and auditory experiences. Despite a torrent of new genres and media with names attached to prefixes such as "multi-" or "hybrid-," most ultimately produce visual works. In artwork created for exhibitions, sound is often regarded as a kind of a supplementary effect that aids the visual experience or entirely sidelined to meaningless background music echoing in the exhibition space; even within the domain of art, many of us are unaware of the existence and depth of the canyon that has formed between the two grand plateaus of music and art.

This is reminiscent of the early history of photography, when it was often misinterpreted through the language of paintings; in the same vein, sound art can be misinterpreted through the lens of other genres of art, namely music and performing arts. At Expo 58, held in Brussels in 1958, the Philips Pavilion was presented by

architect Le Corbusier and composers Iannis Xenakis and Edgard Varèse, who attempted the spatialization of sound into an audio space, while David Tudor sought to transform the exhibition space into a completely new concept of space through music in his *Rainforest* series. Although these attempts date back to more than half a century ago, we remain unfamiliar with such forms of art.

Meanwhile, immersive art, which is based on creating an immersive environment, is rising towards its zenith due to the recent development and popularization of display and graphics technology, staging works that present intense audiovisual experiences that traverse between reality and the virtual world to overload the body and senses of viewers with stimulation. This excess of spectacle, however, presents a slippery descent towards the vanishing point in one-point perspective that makes us forget the sense of ourselves as individuals placed in *hic et nunc* (the here and now), or in other words, existence in time and space. This anemic appreciation of sound art as a genre and the burnout caused by overexposure to extravagant spectacles unsurprisingly contribute to our unfamiliarity with the space created by GRAYCODE and jiiiiin in *Data Composition*, which is filled with sounds that physically react to each other and invite us to sense such sounds with our own body. Aside from such obstacles, however, this unfamiliarity may also be rooted in the essence of the creative practice undertaken by the artists. It is at this point that I would like to discuss the said essence using three major concepts: abstractness, non-objectivity, and affectivity.

In monochrome paintings, we perceive depth through the plane of the canvas, which seems to contain nothing, by experiencing pure colors—colors freed from form and style. In the same way, the sound in GRAYCODE and jiiiiin's works—the oscillation of low sine waves without

overtones—allows us to engage in the act of listening in the meta sense, thereby "listening to the sound by sensing the sound in its purest state," which represents the abstractness of their art. Here, listening is not simply the perception of the mere process of sounds assisting a certain narrative or musical form, but rather the experience of pure time and space that locates the audience at the venue of the manifestation of the event of listening with the body, which evokes the sense of *hic et nunc*. Such place is revealed by the abstract and geometrical waves in the graph of $y=\sin(x)$ that results in the reverberation of the air within the time and space, and corresponds to a world where abstract digital information is converted into physical matter and manifests itself as analogue physical vibrations, where what is given (datum[1]) becomes a piece of fact (factum). This world includes complex entanglements involving noise and entropy, as non-matter is converted and transmitted as a physical sign. It also creates countless overlaps between the linear and the non-linear and the outside and the inside, causing the irreproducible illusion of time internally through the circuits of an oscillator, externally through the vibrations of the viewer's eardrums, and the air, humidity, temperature, and properties of the walls at the place where the transmission is taking place. Through this radical method, GRAYCODE and jiiiiin construct the space of listening in an overlap with the exhibition space within the body and the space through the utilization of sound. Ultimately, the space envisioned by the artists paradoxically appear to be empty.

Just as viewers perceive the work of James Turrell as an empty space filled with light through the act of seeing the light, the space of GRAYCODE and jiiiiin's exhibition is filled with

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[1] The singular form of data.

invisible waves. This represents non-objectivity, one of the core elements of their creative work. Here, non-objectivity indicates not the non-objective characteristic of the works, but the state of existing as objects that are separate from the viewers, and not physical objects existing under the premise that they would always remain there, but the concept of volatile time that expresses a certain sense of perpetuity. In this regard, while our gaze remains static within the exhibition place, our minds become filled with numerous images and sounds.

The paradoxically non-objective sense of perpetuity and the concept of volatile time are also linked to the affectivity of the works in communicating with our body. Unlike emotion, which is focused on shifting moods, affectivity concerns affection, the qualitative changes of our body. In this sense, the sound of *Data Composition* presents us with the bodily experience of direct, physical, and tactile sounds through the lack of contact with the works. This does not refer to the obvious innate properties of sound but rather a sonic actant through which the sound in the exhibition communicates with our body as the subject of an act. Here lies the reason why GRAYCODE and jiiiiin pursue the method of exhibitions rather than performances. The encounter between vibrations of 30 Hz and 40 Hz results in sounds whose constructive and destructive interference among each other generates waves. The amplification and diminution of these waves, in turn, create beats whose wavelength extends over the distance of approximately 34 meters, depending on the conditions of the space such as temperature and humidity. This is because two exceedingly simple oscillations composed of two sine waves create an unfathomably complex sound event through changes in linear and exponential frequencies. In addition to this, the reverberations off the walls of the gallery, according to the artists' plan accounting for the position of viewers and the

structure of the venue, allow viewers to walk through or stand still at a certain point amidst the long waves and actually sense the sound with their body as though feeling the radiation of heat. This phenomenon does not simply involve listening to the sound through our ears, but with our entire body— through the interior organs and the skin. In this process, the artists guide us to perceive the illusion of time and space without the illusion of extravagant spectacles, striving to create a catalyst of change in our body for us to feel as if we are submerged deep underwater or in the weightlessness of space through an abstract sonic scape that exists as a landscape of sound that we cannot hear with headphones or speakers in our everyday lives. Such experience of being placed in the soundscape, which feels unfamiliar and even unpleasant at times, is perhaps the intended result of the aesthetic practice of these young emerging artists whose work originates from the deep canyon between the realms of music and art. As such, we must be especially careful while entering the terrain to which they invite us.

Two works stand out in the exhibition: *sound for on illusion of time,* where a speaker system is set up in a hallway-like space filled with sound, and *on illusion of time,* where eight projections are simultaneously displayed in sync with the aforementioned sound piece to create Moiré patterns of countless black and white lines resembling the beats of a sound and to present a virtual horizon comprised by data. Further demonstrating the artists' attempt to create abstract sound art, the other works on display include drawings and a work consisting of images on multiple layers of transparent acrylic plates that is reminiscent of *Fontana Mix* by John Cage. Almost notably, the exhibition is followed by the release of a new sound piece (*Data Composition*) that will be created using the time data collected from the timestamps of visitors to the online and offline exhibition spaces. In this respect, *Data*

Composition constitutes a space of active detection as well a space where data from multiple open dimensions are collected and saved.

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